

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services



**Testimony of
Neil A. Stanley, Director
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services**

**Budget Oversight Hearing
Committee on Human Services**

April 15, 2013

INTRODUCTION

Good morning Chairman Graham and members of the Committee on Human Services. For the record, I am Neil A. Stanley, Director of the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services.

Joining me are:

- Stephen Luteran, Deputy Director for Youth Programs and Services
- Regina Youngblood, Chief Operating Officer
- Delicia Moore, the Associate Chief Financial Officer for the Human Support Services Cluster; and
- Vernessa Thompson, the Budget Director for the Human Support Services Cluster

I am honored to work with such a talented and committed staff at DYRS. I am very proud of the gains we have made in our strategic goals of preparing young people to succeed; keeping our communities and our facilities safe; and operating effectively and efficiently. Throughout my

testimony, you will hear me refer to these goals and to the key partners – such as Judge Satterfield, Judge Bush, and the Family Court judges -- who are helping us to achieve them.

As we present the Mayor's budget this year, it is clear that our agency does not work in isolation. Our youth and families are served best through a connected fabric of personal, private and public systems. City residents are supported most appropriately when all these systems work together, giving families opportunities where they are needed and not interfering with their autonomy unnecessarily.

Within our Health and Human Services cluster, under Deputy Mayor BB Otero in particular, we have crafted our approaches and our budgets in ways that keep families at the center of our attention. We ask these questions: who served our families before they came to our attention, and who will serve them when they leave our agency? We attempt to strengthen families and communities to reduce the need for intrusive high cost interventions.

Our cluster has focused our efforts on ...

- developing integrated case management systems;
- unifying case plans;
- positive youth development through joint staff training;
- developing a common understanding of trauma-informed practice; and
- eliminating duplicated services and reinvesting savings into a true system of care.

We are working with our sister agencies in the education cluster on initiatives such as...

- truancy prevention;
- early childhood development;
- school improvement; and
- preparing children to grow into successful adults.

Our efforts in the Health and Human Services cluster look at the whole continuum of life to assure...

- pre-natal care;

- early childhood education;
- prevention of teen pregnancies;
- economic security for families, and
- healthy, independent, and productive lives in our golden years.

Throughout my testimony, I will note examples of how we are working together in new and meaningful ways. I will identify many ways that we are using the government resources provided by the Council to improve the lives of all the people in our great City.

I would like to use my time today to:

- Discuss the fiscal year 2014 proposed budget and major spending areas; and
- Highlight the agency's plans in key areas for the coming year.

But first, I'd like to note that the theme for the District's FY 2014 budget is 'Investing for Tomorrow.' As a youth-serving agency, we are strong advocates for investing for tomorrow. I know you, Councilmember Graham, and fellow members of the committee also believe in investing in the city's children, youth, and families.

MAYOR GRAY'S 'INVESTING FOR TOMORROW' PRIORITIES

Deputy Mayors Otero and Quander played critical roles in developing and approving the agency's budget. I firmly believe that the Mayor's proposed budget for FY 2014 provides us with adequate resources...:

- To keep our communities strong and safe;
- To closely monitor and supervise youth in the community;
- To ensure that our young people receive services tailored to their needs; and
- To operate the agency responsibly.

We believe the proposed budget will enable us to preserve our public safety gains, meet the peaks and valleys we anticipate with our population, and also improve the DC YouthLink model.

FY 2014 BUDGET OVERVIEW

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the agency's FY 2014 budget goes directly to services. We are a very lean agency.

Our proposed gross budget is \$105.3 million. This figure represents a 1.4 percent decrease from last year's approved budget. The budget is comprised of \$104.9 million in Local funds and \$386,150 in Intra-District funds. As I said, 88% (\$92.4 million) of the funds will support direct care services, while only 12% (\$12.9 million) will support administrative costs.

Prior to this hearing, our budget team met with the Council Chair's staff and reviewed the budget in finer detail. I am happy to arrange for that level of review with any member of the Committee.

The Mayor's proposed budget is good for DYRS. It supports the agency's strategic goals, which are:

- Preparing youth to succeed
- Operating safe facilities and making our communities safer, and
- Managing our work as efficiently and as effectively as possible.

This budget is designed to promote public safety by building on the strengths of youth in the least restrictive, most homelike environment possible. Our programs matter, and our programs are working. It is no coincidence that public safety outcomes have improved as we have dedicated more resources to each youth. If the programs are changed, we risk our gains in public safety. Of course, we have challenges, and we know our population will always ebb and flow. That is why flexibility is so crucial for us. We have shown that we can be most effective when we can be nimble.

Clearly, there are times when young people need to be in secure detention. We use this option when other interventions just won't work. Our Establishment Act requires that we keep youth in the most home-like environment possible, so we send a youth to a Residential Treatment Center

only when a community-based placement is inadequate for a youth's needs. We are judicious about this because in our experience, RTCs don't always produce the safety outcomes we expect.

Our reinvestment strategy: By avoiding costly out-of-state placements, we are reinvesting in community-based programs and practices proven to reduce recidivism. We want to invest our resources in strategies that can improve public safety outcomes and maximize our return on investment.

Our reduction in RTC use has allowed us to sustain successful programs such as the Workforce development programs that were funded by grants from the Department of Justice and the Department of Labor. In FY2014, we are budgeting approximately \$1.9 million in local funds to continue preparing youth for full-time employment. As a result, we are able to extend subsidized internships. We know youth need money in their pockets now – which is why we provide subsidized internships - and the skills that give them earning potential later – which is why we help them transition to unsubsidized, permanent positions. To demonstrate the importance of these efforts, I would like to share two cases with you.

- 19 year-old Malik is a Ward 8 resident. When he needed help finding a job, we connected him with a copper cabling training program. After Malik completed an intense seven-week training program, he earned three nationally-recognized certifications [in Telecommunications Technologies, Network Cabling, and Network Cabling Copper-Based Systems.] and started a subsidized internship. When his internship ended, the company hired Malik because he had the necessary skills and he demonstrated a strong work ethic and willingness to learn. Today, Malik is working as a cable technician.
- Jasmine went through our *Developing Young Professionals* internship program and had a subsidized internship with D.C.'s Department of Transportation. Today, she is working for a Washington, D.C. law firm.

As you can see, Malik and Jasmine followed different paths, but got to same outcome: gainful employment. Our budget will allow us to provide those services that we know have the greatest impact on helping youth succeed. As important, it will allow us to provide the right services

when and where our youth need them. In years past, there have been constraints on the type and level of services that we had at our disposal. We feel like we are finally at a point where we can deliver on youths' distinct needs. We want to be able to provide them with an appropriate level of care and compensate for what many have been missing throughout their lives.

LOOKING AHEAD

The remainder of my testimony will focus on the agency's plans in the following areas:

- DC YouthLink
- Substance Abuse Interventions
- Family Engagement
- Workforce Development
- Education, and
- Effective Management

I would like to start with DC YouthLink, which is one of our signature initiatives. It is gaining national attention, and we have been invited to present at the Coalition for Juvenile Justice's annual conference in D.C. this May. More than 200 juvenile justice practitioners from across the U.S. are expected to attend and hear how the District is delivering community-based services to court-involved youth.

DC YouthLink

By focusing on community-based interventions, DC YouthLink is at the forefront of a national trend in positive, community-based services and placements for youth committed to a juvenile justice agency. The initiative is based on the premise that youth are best served within their home communities.

DC YouthLink has three complementary objectives:

- To enhance public safety by keeping our youth on the right track
- To rehabilitate youth with services that give them a leg up on life, such as **paid work, substance abuse interventions, tutoring and GED prep**; and

- To build upon the strengths of our local, community-based organizations.

Before going further, I would like to acknowledge our DC YouthLink partners. It is collaboration among Ed Davies and the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, our lead agencies headed by Reverend Donald Isaac and Dr. Fred Phillips, and the entire DC YouthLink service coalition.

DC YOUTHLINK PROMOTES PUBLIC SAFETY BY BUILDING YOUTH'S RESILIENCY

In the past year, more than half of our population has been enrolled in DC YouthLink. Increasingly, youth are staying involved in services and staying out of trouble. For youth who are in community placements as soon as they are committed to the agency, recidivism rates have decreased by 12 percentage points since DC YouthLink was launched. As you know, these rates measure the portion of youth who are convicted of a new offense within their first year of community placement. Recidivism is dropping as we have kept more youth closer to home and enrolled in quality, comprehensive community-based services. This is a public safety gain that we want to preserve and extend.

Another factor that is important to public safety is that youth are where they are supposed to be. Early in DC YouthLink's formation in 2010, nearly one in 12 young people in DC YouthLink were on abscondence during a single day. By mid-summer of 2012, the number of youth on abscondence had fallen to one in 20 and has held steady at this level. This gives me a good opportunity to acknowledge some of our government partners in keeping the public safe. DYRS is a core participant in JuvenileStat, a monthly meeting convened by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. Through JuvenileStat, we share information with MPD, the Attorney General's office, Court Social Services among others that focuses on absconders and high-risk offenders.

These promising public safety outcomes are happening as we do a better job of connecting our youth to the services they need to succeed. And we do not believe that this is a coincidence.

DC YOUTHLINK INVESTS IN DC's COMMUNITIES

Since its launch, DYRS has invested in local groups supporting court-involved youth through DC YouthLink. This money might otherwise have been spent on out-of-state residential placements for these youth. DC YouthLink's locally-based service providers have added new jobs and new skills in our City's neighborhoods.

We are strident about keeping our administrative costs low. In line with best practices for community-based nonprofits, we spend less than 20% on combined indirect, administrative, and non-program costs. Put another way, at least 80 cents of every dollar that we spend on DC YouthLink goes toward direct program costs.

DYRS AND CYITC USE AN OPEN AND COMPETITIVE PROCESS

We are continuing the open and competitive process to select new Service Coalition members that we began last year. I am pleased to announce that on Friday we started the process for the upcoming program year, which starts on October 1st. On Friday, we released a Notice of Funding Availability, which is a precursor to an RFP, for new Service Coalition members for FY14. I encourage local non-profits to apply. The application will be on the Trust's website, which is cyitc.org. That is cyitc.org. Through this process, we continue to ensure that highly-qualified organizations are serving our youth.

Refining our payment structure: We have heard grumbling from some of our existing and potential service providers about our payment rates. We are sensitive to this and are doing something about it because we want to make sure we retain and attract top quality organizations. Last year we added incentive payments to service providers when their youth achieved milestones, such as high school graduation or earning employment. We continue to refine our payment structure and know we will get better over time. To put this in perspective, Wayne County, Michigan, a jurisdiction who introduced an initiative similar to DC YouthLink 12 years ago, is on its 5th iteration of payment.

DYRS AND CYITC USE A ROBUST OVERSIGHT SYSTEM

DYRS and the Trust have developed a rigorous system of oversight. This includes regular reporting on youth engagement, site visits, case file monitoring, and financial reviews. In 2012, DC YouthLink developed Standard Operating Procedures for the Service Coalition. These procedures set clear expectations for service delivery, assessment, and accountability.

We continue to refine our oversight tools so we can anticipate, identify, and address areas of concern. As we move forward, this is what we are focusing on:

- That the service coalition members have the structures in place to effectively do their work and meet our standards
- That they implement best practices, have financial accountability, and are achieving outcomes for the youth they serve

Our agency remains committed to the success of DC YouthLink. In the spirit of continuous improvement, the agency and the Trust have retained a consulting firm with over 15 years of experience with youth-serving organizations. This DC-based firm, Front of the Bus Productions, is conducting a comprehensive analysis of the DC YouthLink model, including interviewing experts and stakeholders within and outside the District. Through our work with Front of the Bus, we anticipate that DC YouthLink will become stronger and more strategic, specifically in the areas of service delivery, accountability, evaluation, and capacity building.

DC YOUTHLINK IS PILOTING EVIDENCE-BASED MENTORING:

Before I leave the subject of DC YouthLink, Councilmember Graham, I know that you are concerned about how we measure the impact of a positive, caring adult on a youth's life. We have heard you. Since the last time we met, the agency is piloting an *Evidence-Based Mentoring* program in partnership with the Institute for Educational Leadership. This focuses on well-defined and documented outcomes.

Research conducted at Princeton, the University of Illinois, and Child Trends demonstrates that having a navigator or a life coach lowers aggressive behaviors, drug use, and recidivism. DC YouthLink gives our youth a trusted adult that they can confide in and rely upon. The subjects our youth talk about most to their coaches are getting a job, school, their family life, drugs, and relationships with their peers.

Let me read from a DC YouthLink mentor's notes about his contacts with a youth I will call Jason. In December he talked with Jason about opening a bank account. Later in the month, he wrote that Jason got mad at his grandmother and, in anger, bought drugs. Jason told his mentor that did not use them because he didn't want to break his recent positive streak and jeopardize his spot on the track team. The mentor, "...commended Jason for facing a common and difficult situation and making a positive choice. [He] reminded Jason that he should always remember to not compound a bad decision/situation by making an equally bad or worse decision."

This is a good point for me to talk about substance abuse intervention.

Substance Use

Last month, DYRS leadership met with senior staff at the Addiction Prevention and Recovery Administration to discuss the agency's approach to treating and preventing substance use. DYRS is implementing a multipronged approach, both with APRA and in collaboration with community-based providers.

The Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, which is part of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (also known as SAMHSA), cautions that not all youth who use alcohol or drugs are dependent or become dependent. Prematurely labeling these youth as having a substance use disorder can do more long-term harm than good.

Research suggests that for court-involved youth whose level of substance use falls short of dependency, community-based outpatient treatment is an effective alternative to residential, inpatient care. Community-based treatment raises the likelihood of...

- greater family involvement;
- long-term, continuous care where the youth lives; and
- stronger community ties for the youth.

We use evidence-based, validated tools to screen and assess youth for substance use issues. The patterns and severity of a youth's substance use problem are critical factors in how we determine which course of treatment is appropriate. We also consider co-existing medical concerns and other social and environmental factors. These assessments tell us that outpatient treatment is appropriate for nearly 95% of our young people who are found to use drugs.

Currently, we use the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument, known as the MAYSI, to screen all youth for substance use issues when they arrive at New Beginnings or at YSC. The MAYSI is used by juvenile justice agencies across the country to screen court-involved youth for mental, behavioral, and substance use problems.

Assessment and diagnosis using the GAIN-I

We also use the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs-Initial exam (the GAIN-I), which is an evidence-based tool for substance use diagnosis, placement, and treatment planning. The GAIN-I is comprehensive and typically lasts two hours. Substantial research supports its reliability and validity.

All youth who are admitted to New Beginnings receive the GAIN-I within 30 days of admission. As of March 14th, we have assessed 83 New Beginnings youth using the GAIN-I. We found none who required inpatient treatment. We did find that 65% of them would benefit from outpatient services.

We administer the GAIN-I to our youth in the community if they flag for further assessment on shorter screenings. Since January, 70 of our young people triggered further attention, so were given the two-hour GAIN-I. Three of the 70 youth require inpatient care and are now receiving that high level of treatment.

In FY2013, New Beginnings implemented the evidence-based **Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT)** to serve residents' mental health and substance use needs. MRT, which is listed in the SAMHSA registry of evidence-based programs, is used by juvenile justice systems in Pennsylvania, Florida, Virginia, Maryland, Nevada, New Mexico, Canada, and other jurisdictions. MRT seeks to teach youth to "think before they act."

Staff at both New Beginnings and YSC, along with DYRS case managers, have been trained in MRT. Additionally, three DC YouthLink providers have been certified to offer MRT in the community.

Going Forward

While I think we have made quite a bit of progress, we still have a ways to go. That's why, going forward, we plan to do the following:

Substance Abuse Prevention and Recovery Support in the Community: Through DC YouthLink, we will continue to provide youth with substance abuse counseling and recovery support. In FY14, we are adding the capacity to offer MRT in the community in addition to other counseling services.

Address Synthetic Drug Use: By April 30th, we expect our community-based providers to include synthetic drug use in their curriculum about substance abuse awareness. And we expect to begin testing for synthetic drug use among our young people by the end of April.

Substance Use Facility: DYRS issued an RFP for a substance use facility, and we are making our determination now. We will update the committee once we award a contract.

Family Engagement Activities

Now to family engagement.

I know the Council feels as strongly as we do that family engagement is vital for what we do. Parents and other caregivers know their own youth better than anyone else does, so are invaluable partners to us. Some of our youth have messy, complicated family lives, which makes supporting and engaging their families tough, but necessary, work. It won't help the long-term rehabilitation of our youth if they return to a broken environment.

We want to become a more family-centered organization and so does Court Social Services. This common agenda is particularly important because CSS gets involved with our youth and families before we do. With leadership from the Vera Institute's Family Justice Program, we have begun working with CSS on improving our communications with families. We anticipate that the Child and Family Services Agency will be joining us because there is overlap among the youth and families we serve.

- *Outside Consultant:* After an RFP process, we have selected the nationally-recognized Vera Institute to take what we are already doing to engage families to the next level. Currently, we offer an orientation to the agency for parents and caregivers, family support groups, monthly seminars, and resource packets. In addition, we provide wrap-around services to families, which include housing assistance and health services.
- *Secure Facility Family Engagement:* We also encourage families to visit their youth in our secure and community-based facilities. We know New Beginnings is outside of D.C., so we make it easier for families to visit by providing free weekend transportation from the Minnesota Avenue metro station. We offer visiting hours at YSC twice a week. We hold special events throughout the year, such as holiday meals, open houses, award ceremonies, high school graduations, and ceremonies when our young people earn vocational certifications.

We hold Youth Family Team Meetings at New Beginnings several times during a youth's commitment to ensure that families are included in developing their youth's service plan, which includes discussing the youth's transition back to the community.

Workforce Development

Now I would like to talk about workforce development. As you know, a priority for us is careers for our youth. To do this, we focus on their job readiness training, vocational certifications, paid internships, and unsubsidized job opportunities. Some of our youth already have work experience. Others need much more help ranging from learning skills to consistently showing up on time for work. Our goal for every youth is that they are on the road to a career by the time their commitment ends. In the upcoming months, DYRS is set to expand its workforce development programming.

Continue the Programs Started by Federal Grants: From 2009 to December 2012, DYRS received a \$6.1 million grant from the Department of Labor (DOL) to expand the educational, workforce training, and employment opportunities for youth returning to the community. We surpassed our original goal, which was to serve 500 youth, and went on to serve 619 young people. Many of these youth received certifications in first aid/CPR, traffic flagger, construction rigger, food handler, drivers education, copper cabling, basic Microsoft skills, Commercial Driver's License/Heavy Equipment Operator, and workplace hazards and workers' rights.

Also, we helped 90 youth with literacy and math because our youth need at least an 8th grade reading level to participate in workforce development.

In FY2012, the DOL grant funds helped DYRS double the number of staff to assist youth with job coaching, career planning, and job readiness skills.

Since the grant period ended, we have continued these programs with local dollars. These programs have proved their efficacy. Moving forward with local funding allows us to keep doing what we know works without the stringency of grant requirements.

DYRS will also continue the work started by the Department of Justice *Second Chance Grant* when it expires in July 2013. This grant will be fully expended, and we are on track to meet our goals of 100 youth certifications in the high tech, high demand fields of copper cabling and broad band installation.

- *Workforce Development Program Manager:* DYRS brought on board a professional to lead our transition from grant-based activities in workforce development to permanent agency initiatives. The new manager has a long history of working with underserved youth. His doctoral research may be of interest to you because it focused on *building human capacity in underserved D.C. youth*.
- *Earn, Learn, and Grow:* DYRS has continued Earn, Learn, and Grow. Through a competitive selection process, we chose Career Path DC and Imageworks. Those providers will give 80 youth paid work experiences in lawn care, community beautification, construction, administrative support, and hospitality, as well as job readiness training and job placement assistance.
- *Vocational Training:* The agency is broadening the vocational experiences we make available to youth at New Beginnings. For example, we brought on the DC Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program (DC RAMP), through an Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Program grant. RAMP now conducts career-focused mentoring for our youth at the facility. In addition, we offer vocational training programs in food service and in barbering to give our youth transferable job skills. To date, six youth at New Beginnings have earned food service Safe Serv certifications and 14 youth have graduated from our Barbering program.

Education

Now to education.

We know that changing schools can be difficult and disruptive for youth. On average, kids lose two months of school-focus with every transition. We are establishing and implementing a Memorandum of Agreement with DCPS and OSSE regarding the making sure their credits transfer when youth return from out-of-state placements or New Beginnings to schools in the community. We are taking on this issue more broadly. When we make placement decisions, we are trying to decrease the number of school changes.

We have other initiatives in the works such as boosting youth's successful completion of the 9th grade because youth who successfully complete 9th grade the first time are up to four times more likely to graduate from high school.

Effective Management

The last area I would like to focus on in this testimony is effective management.

In the coming year, we will continue to manage our resources in a cost-conscious and vigilant manner. Part of our approach to effective management is coordinating service delivery and information sharing among our government partners. I have already mentioned a number of those partners. With a number of agencies, we identify youth who are active in both systems, and we coordinate services accordingly. We do this with the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency and the Department of Mental Health, among others. We wish to thank our cross-agency partners for working with us to better serve youth and achieve greater public safety outcomes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mayor Gray's budget demonstrates his strong and continuing support of the city's children, youth, and families. Forty one percent of the budget - the largest single portion - is devoted to human services.

Mayor Gray's budget fully supports DYRS. It allows us to meet our programming needs and to sustain the gains that we have made in public safety and youth development. As you know, we have achieved precedent-setting, year-to-year reductions in re-convictions and re-arrests. At the same time, more DYRS youth than ever before are attaining a diploma, getting full-time jobs, and connecting with a positive adult role model.

Our portion of the overall proposed budget is \$105.3 million. Although the budget is 1.4% lower than last year, we can operate all of our programs and services and meet our mission and Jerry M. requirements. It gives us the flexibility to get our work done regardless of where a youth is placed or what his or her service needs are. I hope that I am not being alarmist, but I do believe that if our programs are changed, we risk our gains in public safety.

Thank you. Before I take questions, I would like to thank you, Councilmember Graham, and the Council. Our working relationship has had good results for our agency and for our youth.

Thank you.